



**Office of the Attorney General  
Robert E. Cooper, Jr.**

**Department of Commerce and  
Insurance Commissioner  
Leslie Shechter Newman**



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 20207 Nashville, TN 37202-0207**

**Department of Commerce and Insurance  
Division of Consumer Affairs  
500 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, TN 37243**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Oct. 23, 2007  
#07-33**

**CONTACT:  
Sharon Curtis-Flair  
(615) 741-5860**

### **ATTORNEY GENERAL COOPER ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT WITH KROGER CO. TO CURB TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS**

Attorney General Bob Cooper and Director Mary Clement of the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced they have joined the Attorneys General of 42 other states and Guam in an agreement with Kroger Co. to help stop tobacco sales to youth.

Kroger, one of the nation's largest retailers, has 2,468 supermarkets in 31 states under two dozen banners and 779 convenience stores in 15 states under 5 banners. All but 92 of the convenience stores are company-owned. There are 120 stores operating under the name of "Kroger" in Tennessee.

"We appreciate Kroger signing this agreement and demonstrating its commitment to keeping children tobacco-free in Tennessee," said Attorney General Cooper.

The agreement announced today spells out a number of steps the company will implement to prevent youth access to tobacco in its company-owned stores and franchise outlets. From now on, the company must provide notices through employee training and posting in stores of the importance of complying with youth access laws; require franchisees to report violations to the corporate office; and modify franchise agreements to provide that violations of youth access laws

could constitute grounds for termination or non-renewal of the franchise agreement.

The Kroger Assurance of Voluntary Compliance (AVC) is the eleventh such agreement produced by an ongoing, multi-state enforcement effort. Previous agreements cover all CVS, Wal-Mart, Walgreens and Rite Aid stores, and all gas stations and convenience stores operating under the Conoco, Phillips 66, 76, Exxon, Mobil, BP, Amoco, ARCO and Chevron brand names, in the signing states. Combined, the agreements cover over 80,000 retail outlets across the nation. Launched in 2000, the multi-state enforcement effort by the Attorneys General seeks to secure national retailers' agreement to take specific corrective actions to prevent sales of tobacco products to minors. State laws prohibit such sales. The agreements incorporate "best practices" to reduce sales to minors, developed by the Attorneys General in consultation with researchers and state and federal tobacco control officials.

The Attorneys General have long recognized that youth access to tobacco products ranks among the most serious public health problems. Studies show more than 80 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before the age of 18. Research indicates that every day in the United States, more than 2,000 people under the age of 18 start smoking and that one-third of those persons ultimately will die from a tobacco-related disease. Young people are particularly susceptible to the hazards of tobacco, often showing signs of addiction after smoking only a few cigarettes.

Attorney General Cooper would like to thank the Tennessee Department of Agriculture for its assistance in the effort to combat youth access to tobacco products. This Office frequently obtains data from the Department of Agriculture regarding its test shopping of entities in Tennessee to determine if these entities are selling tobacco products to minors. As a result of the data the Department provides, the Office is able to participate in multi-state efforts, such as this one, to ensure the public health concerns regarding the illegal sale of tobacco products to minors are met.